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ABSTRACT

This report examines principal-recruitment practices in Kentucky. The job of principal in this state became more challenging as school-reform initiatives mandated a greater emphasis on instructional leadership and decision making. Using a 2x2x3 experimental design, the effects of job attributes (instructional leadership, management), job-information sources (school site, district central office) and school level (elementary school, middle school, high school) on reactions of applicants (N=168) for principal jobs were examined. Results show that reactions were more favorable at the high-school level when the job was described with management job attributes. At the elementary- and middle-school levels, reactions were more favorable when the job was described with instructional-leadership job attributes. Job perceptions among individuals in the broad pool of applicants paralleled perceptions of the job among incumbent principals. Findings indicate that administrators can improve recruitment efficiency, such as application rates and applicant pool size, by constructing job messages containing job attributes with maximal applicant appeal. The curricula of many principal-certification programs may be inconsistent both with potential entrants' interests and with the demands of school-reform legislation. The research approach used here can be used to investigate other factors influencing applicant decisions. (Contains 29 references.) (RJM)

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Running head: APPLICANT REACTIONS TO RECRUITMENT

Applicant Reactions to Principal Recruitment Practices in a Reform Environment: The Effects of Job Attributes, Job Information Source, and School Level

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Abstract

The job of principal becomes more challenging as school reform initiatives mandate greater emphasis on instructional leadership and delegate decision making from district central offices to school sites. These changes lend increased importance to the task of principal recruitment, a process involving decisions made by applicants (e.g., decision to apply for the job) as well as organizational representatives. Application decisions must be affirmative or recruitment will fail. Using a 2 x 2 x 3 experimental design, this study examined the effects of job attributes (instructional leadership, management), job information sources (school site, district central office) and school level (elementary school, middle school, high school) on reactions of applicants (N = 168) for principal jobs described in recruitment brochures. Reactions were more favorable at the high school level when the job was described with management job attributes. At the elementary and middle school levels, reactions were more favorable when the job was described with instructional leadership job attributes. Implications for practice, certification curricula, and research are discussed.

Applicant Reactions to Principal Recruitment Practices in a Reform Environment: The Effects of Job Attributes, Job Information Source, and School Level

The job of principal may be the most challenging administrative position in public education today. Accordingly, practices utilized to recruit qualified individuals into the principalship deserve full attention on the part of principal certification faculty and administrators responsible for filling principal vacancies. Principal recruitment becomes especially important in areas of the country where school reform legislation emphasizes particular job attributes for administrative positions (e.g., instructional leadership attributes) and mandates governance structures delegating administrative authority to school sites (e.g., site-based decision making).

The present study addressed principal recruitment practices in Kentucky, where the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA) was passed in response to a 1989 State Supreme Court decision declaring the state's school system unconstitutional. KERA has made the job of principal more demanding (David, 1994) in at least two respects: (a) increased emphasis on leadership attributes of the job, especially in the area of instructional leadership; and (b) mandated installation of local school councils composed of the principal, three teachers, and two parents. This investigation was conducted to develop empirical knowledge useful for attracting qualified individuals into the principalship. The purpose of this study was to investigate whether or not reactions to principal recruitment stimuli are influenced by specified job attributes, sources of information about the job, and applicant characteristics. Study participants were experienced teachers, the individuals who compose the broad pool of potential entrants to the principalship. It was an expectation of this study that findings would inform administrative practice related to three tasks instrumental to effective principal recruitment: (a) recruiting qualified individuals into principal certification programs, (b) structuring curricula for principal certification programs, and (c) recruiting qualified individuals to fill principal vacancies.

Given the demands placed on principals, particularly in areas undergoing school reform (e.g., Kentucky), it is surprising how little empirical knowledge exists about applicant reactions to principal recruitment practices. This void exists relative to both decision points that are crucial for entry to the principalship: (a) the decision to apply for entry to a principal certification program and (b) the decision to apply for a principal vacancy. The present investigation addressed this gap in existing principal recruitment research by conducting an experiment to assess reactions of potential applicants to a specified recruitment practice (i.e., principal recruitment brochure) within a school reform environment (i.e., Kentucky). Applicant reactions to principal recruitment messages were assessed with respect to an applicant characteristic, school level of the applicant's job assignment (elementary school, middle school, high school), and with respect to two recruitment message factors: (a) job attributes described in the recruitment message (instructional leadership, management); and (b) sources of information about the job identified in the recruitment message (school site, district central office).

Related Literature

Within both the human resources and educational administration literatures, there is a growing body of research focusing on applicant reactions to organizational recruitment practices (i.e., recruitment literature, formal position advertisements, job descriptions, employment interviews). Understanding applicant reactions to principal recruitment practices is informed by existing research findings relative to: (a) applicant decisions during the recruitment process, (b) job attributes specified in recruitment messages, (c) sources of information about the job, and (d) applicant characteristics.

Applicant Decisions

Recent recruitment research conducted both in the private sector (e.g., Schwab, Rynes & Aldag, 1987; Rynes, 1991; Rynes & Barber, 1990) and in educational settings (e.g., Rynes & Lawler, 1983; Winter, 1996a, 1996b; Young, Rinehart & Heneman, 1993;

Young, Rinehart & Place, 1989) has focused increased attention on the perspective and decision making processes of job applicants. The rationale for investigating factors relevant to applicant decisions and behaviors is evident. If qualified individuals do not apply for the job, there will be little opportunity to influence applicant decisions during subsequent stages of the recruitment process (e.g., recruitment interviews, site visits, job offers). All applicant decisions must be affirmative, or success of the entire recruitment effort will be compromised.

Recruitment is a two-way process involving decisions made both by organizational representatives and by job applicants. Despite this fact, it is not unusual for administrators to focus all of their attention on organizational decisions (e.g., decision to interview an applicant, decision to offer the job). This can lead to the construction of recruitment practices that may fail to stimulate affirmative applicant decisions (e.g., decision to apply for the job, decision to accept an interview, decision to accept a job offer). Unlike individuals seeking entry level teaching positions, potential entrants to the principalship are experienced in job search processes and perceive themselves as having multiple job opportunities. At a minimum, applicants who regard a given organization's recruitment practices as negative can choose to remain in their current positions. In many instances, recruiting organizations are faced with a competitive situation as well. The best qualified applicants may choose not to apply for jobs announced by organizations that employ unappealing recruitment practices, and elect, instead, to apply for jobs announced by organizations that utilize more attractive recruitment practices.

Despite the importance of application decisions, there has been limited research about applicant reactions to recruitment practices, especially those practices occurring prior to the employment interview. This void exists both in the management literature (Rynes, 1991) and in the educational administration literature (Winter, 1996a, 1996b). There have been no empirical studies examining application decisions prior to the

employment interview in the principal recruitment context. The present study addressed this void by investigating applicant reactions to recruitment brochures used during the application stage of recruitment.

Job Attributes

In a review of over twenty years of private sector recruitment research, involving a wide array of experimental research designs, Rynes (1991) concluded that information about the job is the most salient factor affecting applicant decisions. Job information is conveyed via job messages contained in organizational recruitment practices (e.g., recruitment advertisements, recruitment literature, job description mailings, employment interviews). Two types of job information have been found to impact application decisions: organizational characteristics and job characteristics (i.e., job attributes). The consensus of extant research findings is that job attributes "...swamp other variables as influences on job choice and retention" (Rynes, 1991, p. 432).

Similar empirical evidence exists within the educational administration context. Investigators have found that job attributes impact applicant reactions to a variety of recruitment practices including: (a) employment interviews (Young & Heneman, 1986); (b) recruitment videos (Young et al., 1993; Young et al., 1989); (c) recruitment brochures (Young, Galloway, & Rinehart, 1990); (d) job descriptions (Rynes & Lawler, 1983); and (e) formal position advertisements (Winter, 1996a, 1996b). The focal job addressed by most of these studies has been the job of teacher at either the entry level (e.g., Rynes & Lawler, 1983) or a level requiring prior job experience (e.g., Young et al., 1993; Winter 1996a, 1996b).

Applicant reactions to recruitment practices vary also, according to the type of job attributes described in a given recruitment practice. Rynes and Lawler (1983) found that, when reacting to written job descriptions, entry level applicants for teaching positions preferred jobs located in the Midwest and out of inner city schools. Young et al. (1989) found that experienced teachers, as applicants, reacted more favorably to

recruitment videos describing an elementary teaching vacancy with subjective (i.e., psychological) job attributes than to videos containing either objective (i.e., economic) job attributes or critical contact (i.e., work requirement) job attributes.

In the existing educational administration literature (e.g., Bossert, Dwyer, Rowan & Lee, 1982; Bridges, 1982; Cuban, 1988; Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Murphy, 1992), perceptions relative to the job of principal have been addressed from the perspective of job incumbents. Existing research devotes considerable discussion to the organizational roles and job attributes of the principalship. Much attention has been focused on the instructional leadership and management attributes of the job. These particular attributes are emphasized frequently in the certification standards of states implementing school reform. This is the case with certification standards for the state (i.e., Kentucky) that served as the site for the present investigation. Also, educational researchers have asserted that perceptions of the principalship vary as a result of an interaction effect involving attributes of the job and school level:

> Differences also exist between elementary and secondary school principals. Most elementary principals devote more time to curriculum and instructional matters than do their secondary counterparts, and they view themselves more often as curriculum or instructional leaders than managers. Secondary school principals usually complain they have little time for curriculum and instruction (although they recognize the importance of such matters) and see themselves more often as general managers (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 1996, p. 429).

This study examined the effects of the interaction described above, but did so relative to the reactions of potential entrants to the principalship during recruitment.

Job Information Sources

Job information source is another factor shown to impact applicant decisions. Organizational psychologists (Berlo, Lemert & Mertz, 1969; Hovland, Janis & Kelley, 1953; Porter, Lawler & Hackman, 1975) have identified three factors affecting the

perceptions of information sources: (a) trust in the source, (b) expertise of the source, and (c) liking for the source. These three factors translate into "credibility" of the information source for a verbal or written message (e. g., job recruitment message). Fisher, Ilgen, and Hoyer (1979) conducted an empirical investigation to assess job applicant decisions with respect to different sources of information about the job (recruiter, friend, job incumbent, professor). Study participants reacted to job descriptions for business positions. Findings indicated applicant decisions (i.e., decision to accept the job) were least favorable if the job information source was a recruiter. Decisions were most favorable when the job information source was a job incumbent.

Within the educational recruitment context, Young and Heneman (1986) assessed the influence of job information sources on the application decisions of experienced teachers. Study participants reacted to simulated recruitment interviews for a teaching vacancy. Interviews were structured to provide two levels for job information source: (a) administrator (i.e., recruiter) only; and (b) administrator and teacher (i.e., job incumbent). Information source did not account for a significant amount of variance in reactions of teachers to selection interviews.

The present study examined job information sources within an educational recruitment context also. Unlike previous studies, however, the job serving as the focal position for this investigation was the job of principal. Job information source was of particular interest in the school reform setting (i.e., Kentucky) serving as the site for this study because authority for hiring principals had been transferred, as mandated by KERA, from district central offices to local school councils. Job information source was operationalized by identifying either the school site or the district central office as the source for information about a job described in a principal recruitment brochure.

Applicant Characteristics

Previous educational recruitment research has revealed that applicant characteristics alone, or in interaction with other variables, impact applicant reactions

to recruitment practices. Young et al. (1993) examined the influence of work experience (experienced, inexperienced) and job attributes (economic, intrinsic, work context) on applicant decisions relative to job messages for an elementary teaching position. The recruitment message was conveyed via recruitment videos. Across all levels of job attributes, experienced applicants rated the job less favorably than did inexperienced applicants.

Winter (1996a) found that applicant sex interacted with job attributes to produce varying reactions to formal recruitment advertisements for elementary teaching vacancies. Within an applicant pool composed of equal numbers of experienced male and female applicants, males preferred jobs described with extrinsic job attributes (e.g., salary, job security), and females preferred jobs described with intrinsic job attributes (e.g., sense of achievement, opportunity for self-expression).

The applicant characteristic examined in this study was applicant school level (elementary school, middle school, high school). The research interest was to determine whether or not school level interacts with job attributes (instructional leadership, management) to influence reactions of job applicants in a manner similar to the interaction purported to exist in the post-hire context (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 1996).

Advancements

The present study achieved five advancements in empirical research about applicant reactions to principal recruitment practices. First, this study examined a recruitment practice (i.e., principal recruitment brochure) that had not been investigated previously. Second, by focusing on the decision to apply for the job, this investigation responded to the call by Rynes (1991) for research about applicant decisions prior to the employment interview. Third, the effects of instructional leadership and management job attributes were assessed relative to principal recruitment. Fourth, applicant reactions to job information sources for a principalship (school site, district central office) were examined. Fifth, a three-way interaction (job

attributes, job information sources, school level) was addressed that had not been investigated in the principal recruitment context.

Method

This study investigated the effects of three nominal scaled independent variables: job attributes (instructional leadership, management), job information source (school site, district central office), and school level (high school, middle school, elementary school). The dependent variable was interval scaled and consisted of an additive composite rating of applicant reaction to a principal recruitment brochure. Given the characteristics of these variables, the study utilized a 2 x 2 x 3 completely crossed, fixed-factor analysis of variance (ANOVA) design, which yielded twelve cells (n = 14).

Participants

Experienced elementary school, middle school, and high school teachers (N = 168) role played applicants reacting to principal recruitment brochures. Participants were asked to assume they were actively seeking a job as principal at the school level corresponding to their current job assignments (elementary school, middle school, or high school). The participants were selected at random from a large pool of experienced teachers within the largest school district in Kentucky, and randomly assigned to treatment conditions. Participants were employed at schools that were representative of the ethnic, racial, and socio-economic diversity of the district. Sample size was determined via a power analysis conducted according to procedures recommended by Cohen (1977, pp. 396-400). The number of subjects (N = 168) was specified by the power analysis based on a desired minimum effect size (omega-squared = .06), a defined level of significance (alpha = .05), and a specific power level (power = .80). The distribution of the participants by race was: white (149), African American (14), Asian American (2), and Native American (3). Distribution of the participants by school level and by sex was: high school (18 male, 38 female), middle school (19 male, 37 female),

and elementary school (6 male, 50 female). Other descriptive data for study participants are contained in Table 1.

Insert Table 1 about here

Independent Variables

School level (elementary school, middle school, high school) was operationalized by actual job assignment of the participants. Job information source (school site, district central office) was operationalized by statements in the "Selection Process" section of the recruitment brochures identifying the entity responsible for providing job-related information and receiving job applications. The source for job information was described in one of two ways: (a) a school site search committee composed of teachers, staff and parents; or (b) a district central office search committee under the direction of the Director of Personnel Services.

Job attributes (instructional leadership, management) were identified and selected for use in the study using a content validity paradigm suggested by Anastasi (1976). The content validation process involved: (a) a literature review (e.g., Bossert, Dwyer, Rowan & Lee, 1982; Bridges, 1982; Cuban, 1988; Donmoyer & Wagstaff, 1990; Greenfield, 1995; Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Murphy, 1992; Stronge, 1993) performed to identify instructional leadership and management job attributes; (b) a review of mandated job responsibilities for the job of principal contained in publications of several states including the study site (i.e., Kentucky); (c) use of experts (principals, principal recruitment officials, university principal certification instructors) to review and sort job attributes into categories defined as either instructional leadership or management. Job attributes were utilized in the actual study only if they were identified unanimously as belonging to a single content domain (instructional leadership or management) at each step of the content validation procedure.

Operationalization of the independent variables was accomplished by constructing four principal recruitment brochures identical in length, style, and format. The brochures contained the following sections: (a) general information, (b) job information, (c) minimum qualifications, (d) application procedures, and (e) selection process. Content was held constant across all versions of the brochures with respect to the sections describing general information (e.g., "N County School District is seeking applications for a vacant principal position"), minimum qualifications (e.g., master's degree in K-12 education), and application procedures (e.g., "Upon receipt of the above information, a letter of acknowledgment and an application packet will be mailed to you"). The job information sections of the brochures were used to manipulate job attributes describing the job, and contained either six instructional leadership job attributes (e.g., "implements evaluation strategies for improvement of instruction") or six management job attributes (e.g., "provides for management, allocation, and control of fiscal and human resources"). The selection process sections of the brochures were utilized to manipulate job information source (school site, district central office).

Dependent Variable.

The dependent variable was "applicant reaction" to a principal recruitment brochure. The evaluation instrument consisted of items with five-point Likert-type scales (5 being more favorable than 1). There were four items: (a) overall attractiveness of the job, (b) likelihood of applying for the job, (c) likelihood of accepting an interview for the job, and (d) likelihood of accepting the job if offered. An additive composite score served as the dependent variable in a manner similar to previous recruitment studies (e.g., Winter, 1996a; Winter, 1996b; Young et al., 1989; Young et al., 1993).

Pilot Study

The experimental instruments were administered to a pilot group (N = 31) with characteristics similar to those of actual study participants. The pilot study was conducted to accomplish three tasks: (a) check manipulation of job attributes, (b) check

manipulation of job information source, and (c) assess reliability of the evaluation instrument. Each pilot participant received a recruitment brochure with an evaluation form attached to it, and a sealed envelope that contained a sheet with two multiple-choice questions. The sheet in the sealed envelope was coded for cross referencing to the version of the brochure being assessed by the participant. The first multiple-choice question required participants to indicate how the job was described in the brochure. The first question had three possible responses: (a) instructional leadership, (b) management, and (c) do not recall. The second multiple-choice question required participants to identify the entity responsible for providing information about the job. The second question had three possible responses: (a) school site, (b) district central office, and (c) do not recall.

The pilot study procedures required participants to perform five steps in the following sequence: (a) read a principal recruitment brochure, (b) complete an evaluation instrument, (c) return the brochure and attached evaluation form, (d) open the sealed envelope and complete the two questions on the enclosed sheet, and (e) return the sheet containing the two questions. Of the thirty-one pilot participants, twenty-nine (94 percent) answered the question about the job orientation (instructional leadership versus management) correctly, and twenty-eight (90 percent) answered the question about source of job information correctly. These results indicated manipulation of the independent variables was perceived as intended. Coefficient alpha (.89) for the evaluation instrument was well within the range recommended by Nunnally (1967) for use of a composite score in statistical analysis.

Hypotheses.

Because previous empirical research did not exist relative to applicant reactions to a principal recruitment brochure, null hypotheses were assessed on an a posteriori basis. All main and interaction effects were tested. The null hypotheses addressing main effects were: (a) there will be no difference between applicant reactions to

recruitment brochures containing instructional leadership job attributes and brochures containing management job attributes; (b) there will be no difference between applicant reactions to brochures indicating school site as the job information source and brochures indicating the district central office as the job information source; and (c) there will be no difference in applicant reactions associated with applicant school level. In accordance with the ANOVA design selected, null hypotheses were tested also for the two-way and three-way interactions.

Results

Cell means and standard deviations for participant ratings are summarized in Table 2. Coefficient alpha for the actual study was .94. Results of the ANOVA are shown in Table 3.

Insert Tables 2 and 3 about here

At the specified level of significance (alpha = .05) two significant effects were detected: (a) a main effect for job attributes, and (b) a job attributes by school level interaction. To assess the practical significance of these effects, omega-squared was computed according to procedures explicated by Kirk (1995, pp. 177-180). Results of the omega-squared calculations indicated two percent of the variance in applicant reactions to a recruitment brochure was explained by job attributes, and twenty-one percent of the variance in applicant reactions was explained by the job attributes by school level interaction.

Because job attributes represented a sub-set of the two-way interaction (job attributes by school level), only the interaction term was submitted to further analysis and interpretation. Using procedures explicated by Keppel (1991) simple effects and simple comparisons (i.e., single-df comparisons) were computed. Simple effects for

school level were significant both at the management level of job attributes, F (2, 156) = 15.42, $p < .001$, and at the instructional level of job attributes, F (2, 156) = 9.62, $p < .001$. To isolate the cell mean differences contributing to these significant simple effects, single-df comparisons were calculated.

Results of the single-df comparisons are as follows. At the management level of job attributes, the mean score for high school was significantly higher than the mean scores for middle school, F (1, 156) = 10.82, $p < .01$, and for elementary school, F (1, 156) = 30.38, $p < .0001$. Also, the mean score for middle school was significantly higher than the mean score for elementary school, F (1, 156) = 4.94, $p < .05$. At the instructional leadership level of job attributes, the mean scores for both middle school, F (1, 156) = 17.27, $p < .0001$, and elementary school, F (1, 156) = 16.75, $p < .0001$, were significantly higher than the mean score for high school. There was no significant difference between the mean scores for middle school and elementary school at the instructional leadership level of job attributes.

Discussion

Study findings have implications for principal recruitment practice, principal certification curricula, and future principal recruitment research.

Principal Recruitment Practice

Results of this study provide information useful to educational administrators interested in improving the efficiency and effectiveness of principal recruitment programs. At the application stage of principal recruitment, applicant reactions to principal recruitment brochures vary depending both on the job attributes used to describe the position and on the school level of the applicant. Administrators can improve recruitment efficiency (i.e., application rates) and effectiveness (applicant pool size, number of quality applicants) by constructing job messages containing job attributes with maximal applicant appeal. Adapting practices to applicant preferences early in the recruitment process should contribute also to the efficiency and

effectiveness of practices utilized latter in the recruitment process (interviews, assessment center screenings, job offers). Results from this study indicate job perceptions among individuals in the broad pool of applicants for the principalship (i.e., experienced teachers) appear to parallel perceptions of the job among incumbent principals (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 1996) with respect to job attributes preferred at the three school levels. This finding suggests perceptions of the job of principal may be stable as individuals progress from the stage of application to certification programs to the stage of actual employment as a principal.

From a practical perspective, study findings can guide practicing administrators and certification officials in constructing recruitment practices with greater impact. Recruitment practices should contain job information that is attractive to the pool of target applicants. This can be accomplished by using recruitment messages describing the position with both instructional leadership and management job attributes. If the task is to recruit individuals at the high school level, recruiters should be aware that potential applicants are likely to favor management attributes of the job, and be sure to include substantial management content in the recruitment practices employed to elicit initial application for the job. If the task is to recruit at the elementary school and middle school levels, potential applicants are likely to prefer job messages with instructional leadership content, and job messages should be constructed to highlight instructional leadership attributes of the job.

In actual practice, principal recruitment practices are often constructed in a haphazard fashion, with little thought given to the completeness or emphasis of job message content. This can be confirmed by inspecting principal recruitment messages placed in educational media (e.g., "Education Week"). Many announcements for principal vacancies emphasize one type of job attributes (i.e., management) at the expense of other types of job attributes (i.e., instructional leadership). A similar pattern exists frequently with respect to the content of principal certification programs.

Certification curricula tend to place undue emphasis on the management aspects of the principalship as opposed to the instructional leadership aspects of the job (e.g., Bossert et al., 1992; Bridges, 1982; Greenfield, 1995; Murphy, 1992). This unbalanced depiction of the job of principal is at odds with the certification standards and formal job qualifications in school reform environments (e.g., Kentucky), and does not optimize the effort to recruit qualified individuals into certification programs.

Principal Certification

The curricula of many principal certification programs may be inconsistent with both the interests of potential entrants to the principalship and with the demands of school reform legislation. Murphy (1992) has decried the fact that the curricula of most certification programs emphasize management processes at the expense of other school priorities such as curriculum and instruction. Results of the present study suggest that, in the case of entrants to principal certification programs at the high school level, a curriculum with undue emphasis on management aspects of the job may reinforce an existing management predisposition among potential job applicants. A curriculum skewed towards development of management skills does not respond to the exigencies of school reform legislation (e.g., KERA) demanding higher standards of instructional leadership from educational administrators and improved academic performance from students.

In the case of certification programs at the elementary school and middle school levels, curricula with a bias towards management processes may have negative consequences deriving from the instructional leadership preferences of potential program entrants. Elementary school and middle school teachers with high potential for becoming principals may react negatively to certification curricula emphasizing mostly management skills, and decide not to pursue principal certification. Also, individuals enrolled in certification programs, may become discouraged by the lack of instructional leadership content and opt not to apply for principal vacancies after

program completion. With respect to potential applicants at the elementary school and middle school levels, study findings appear to indicate that a more balanced treatment of instructional leadership and management aspects of the principalship in certification curricula could stimulate higher application rates for certification programs and for principal vacancies.

Future Research

Findings from the present study provide guidance for future empirical research about the recruitment of educational administrators. The research approach employed in this study can be utilized to investigate additional factors impacting applicant decisions such as: (a) applicant reactions to other principal recruitment practices (e.g., position announcements, job description mailings, recruitment videos, employment interviews); (b) reactions of applicants for other administrative positions (e.g., assistant principal, superintendent, central office positions); (c) applicant perceptions of other types of principal job attributes (e.g., communications, politics, work environment), and (d) other applicant characteristics (e.g., race, age, sex, work values) relevant to the principal recruitment context. Research should be conducted to determine why perceptions of the principalship vary among potential applicants and job incumbents with respect to school level. The answer to this question might provide information about the organizational structure of schools, or the socialization processes among teachers and principals, that can lead to improved school administration.

Limitations

Results of this investigation should be interpreted with caution. Applicants in other geographical regions of the country might have reacted differently than the participants in this study. Applicants in areas not undergoing school reform might have perceived the job differently than applicants in the school reform environment serving as the site for this study. Further, even though the applicant reactions in this study were assessed prior to certification and turned out to be similar to the purported job

perceptions of job incumbents (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 1996), it is possible perceptions of applicants measured after completion of certification might have produced different results. Future research should address differences in applicant reactions as measured before, during and after principal certification. Finally, this study involved a role playing procedure. It is possible applicants might have exhibited different application reactions under actual recruitment conditions.

Conclusion

Delivery of quality educational programs and implementation of school reform initiatives depend, in part, on the administrators recruited to lead the educational process. Principals are the administrators who have the most direct impact on the learning environment. Recruiting excellent principals requires eliciting affirmative application decisions on the part of qualified applicants for both certification programs and job vacancies. The present study uncovered new basic knowledge that can assist practicing administrators, certification faculty and investigators interested in improving the effectiveness of principal recruitment. In turn, more effective principal recruitment can make a significant contribution to improved leadership and administration of the nation's schools.

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Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for Study Participants

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Range
Age (Years)	168	43.54	8.29	24-66
Experience (Years)	168	15.46	8.64	1-33
Educational Level (a)	168	2.96	1.05	1-6
Number of Children	168	1.56	1.20	0-5
Marital Status (b)	168	2.22	1.09	1-5
Number of Times Interviewed	168	4.83	4.21	1-25

(a) Scored: B.A. = 1, B.S. = 2, M.A. = 3, M.S. = 4, Ed. D. = 5, Ph. D. = 6

(b) Scored: Single = 1, Married = 2, Widowed = 3, Separated = 4, Divorced = 5

Table 2

Summary of Cell Means and Standard Deviations

Note: Means and standard deviations are based on additive composite scores.

Job Attributes:		Management		Instruction	
Information Source:		School Site	Central Office	School Site	Central Office
School Level:					
High School	M	17.00	15.64	10.79	13.29
	SD	2.60	3.08	5.37	4.99
Middle School	M	12.50	12.86	16.71	16.57
	SD	4.26	4.61	3.47	1.83
Elem. School	M	10.07	10.36	16.43	16.79
	SD	5.72	5.18	3.06	3.58

N = 168

n = 14

Table 3

Analysis of Variance for Applicant Reaction by Job Attributes, Job Information Source, and School Level

Source	df	SS	MS	F	Omega-Squared
Job Attributes	1	172.02	172.02	10.02 *	.02
Information Source	1	4.67	4.67	.27	
School Level	2	44.51	22.26	1.30	
Attributes By Source	1	13.71	13.71	.80	
Attributes By Level	2	877.30	438.65	25.57 **	.21
Source By Level	2	1.51	.76	.04	
Attributes By Source By Level	2	39.25	19.62	1.14	
Error	156	2675.86	17.15		
Total	167	3828.83			

* $p < .01$

** $p < .001$